

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9495
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AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D N T I A L GUATEMALA 1476

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GT
SUBJECT: POST-ELECTION FUROR - SOME PERSPECTIVES THROUGH THE HAZE

AMID WLTER OF CHARGES, COUNTER CHARGES AND GENERAL UPROAR
ATTENDING THE ELECTION TALLY PROCESS, AMPLY PORTRAYED
IN OUR SITREPS TO DATE, SOME GENERALIZATIONS AND TENTATIVE
JUDGMENTS SEEM VALID:

(1) THE POST-ELECTION ATMOSPHERE HAS SEVERELY
INJURED CREDIBILITY OF THE ELECTION PROCESS AND RESULT.
WHICHEVER CANDIDATE EMERGES AS GUATEMALA'S NEXT PRESIDENT, HIS
LEGITIMACY WLL BE TAINTED IN THE EYES OF EVERYONE BUT HIS
PARTISANS.

(2) WHATEVER THE VALIDITY OF TH FRAUD CHARGES AND COUNTER
CHARGES (AND AT THIS WRITING ONLY THE BLATANT GUATEMALA CITY
MANIPULATION -- OF DEBATABEL PURPOSE -- CAN BE SUBSTANTIALLY
VERIFIED), THEY ARE BELIEVED IN GUATEMALA. SOME FRAUD,
PERHAPS A GREAT DEAL, DOUBTLESS OCCURRED. SEPARATING
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FACT FROM EMOTIONAL AND TACTICAL ALLEGATIONS WILL BE
DIFFICULT.

(3) NO CANDIDATE WILL RECEIVE AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY.
UNLESS THE PROCESS IS INTERRUPTED THE CONGRESS WILL CHOSE
LATER THIS MONTH BETWEEN LUCAS AND PERALTA AZURDIA.

(4) THE LIKELY CLOSENESS OF THE FINALLY ANNOUNCED RESULT, AND THE SKEPTICISM WHICH INEVITABLY WILL GREET IT, WILL DILUTE BUT NOT ENTIRELY ELIMINATE SUCH MORAL FORCE THE GUATEMALAN TRADITION OF VOTING IN THE FRONT-RUNNER POSSESSES.

(5) NEITHER LUCAS NOR PERALTA AZURDIA CAN COUNT ON AN AUTOMATIC MAJORITY IN CONGRESS. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATES (DCG) (13 DEPUTIES) AND THE INDEPENDENTS (8 DEPUTIES), WHO REPRESENT THE SWING VOTES, WILL HAVE CONSIDERABLE NEGOTIATING POWER COLLECTIVELY AND INDIVIDUALLY. THE DCG LEANS TO PERALTA AZURDIA.

(6) WHILE PRESIDENT LAUGERUD TOLERATED SUPPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT APPARATUS FOR THE LUCAS CANDIDACY, THERE HAS COME TO LIGHT THUS FAR NO INDICATION OF PRESIDENTIAL INVOLVEMENT IN FRAUD.

(7) SIMILARLY, THERE HAS BEEN NO CONVINCING INDICATION OF MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN FRAUD.

(8) POSTURING TO THE CONTRARY, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS THEMSELVES RECOGNIZE THAT, FRAUD OR NOT FRAUD, PERALTA MENDEZ DID NOT WIN.

(9) IN THE EVENT OF A LUCAS VICTORY IN THE CONGRESS
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(AND BARRING A POLITICAL MODUS VIVENDI), THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (AND PERHAPS OTHERS) WILL TRY TO GET THE USG TO SIGNAL ITS DISSATISFACTION.

(10) THIS POST-ELECTION SPECTACLE HAS LENT SUBSTANCE TO GENERALIZED CYNICISM ABOUT DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN GUATEMALA. IT WILL STRENGTHEN THE LATENT APPEAL OF THE EXTREME LEFT, WHICH ALL ALONG HAS DENOUNCED THE ELECTIONS AS A FARCE AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AS A SHAM. THIS CLIMATE WILL FACILITATE RECRUITMENT FROM THE FRINGES OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT.

(11) THERE IS NO PRESENT INDICATION THAT THE MILITARY WANTS TO INTERVENE IN THE PROCESS. THE ERUPTION OF VIOLENCE (ALWAYS POSSIBLE WHERE THE MLN IS CONCERNED) COULD FORCE ITS HAND, HOWEVER.
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